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EXCOM 81-9015

DD/A REGISTRY

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Committee Members

FROM : Robert M. Gates  
Director, DCI/DDCI Executive Staff

SUBJECT : Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 6 May 1981

1. The Executive Committee met on 6 May 1981 on three topics: Progress Report on Improving Language Capabilities; Task Force Report on Classification/Compensation of Language Specialists; and Length of Training Courses. Admiral Inman chaired the session; participants included Messrs. McMahon (D/NFAC); [ ] DDA; Stein (Acting DDO); Taylor (ADDS&T); Lipton (Comptroller); Ware (D/EEO); Briggs (IC); and Fitzwater (D/OP).

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2. Progress Report on Improving Language Capabilities.

[ ] highlighted this report and reviewed the recommendations. The DDCI asked for members' views on the recommendations, noting that decisions would be made later. Mr. Briggs made three observations about the overall report: the reliability of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) referred to has been questioned; the report lacks any long-range plan regarding what language capabilities the Agency will require and in what quantities; and existing Language School staffing seems insufficient to respond to all the recommendations in the report.

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3. Reviewing Section I on language training requirements,

[ ] stressed the importance of having components' requirements one year in advance to ensure adequate preparation. Mr. Stein concurred, but emphasized the need for some flexibility to accept ad hoc requirements from his directorate as long as that flexibility was not abused. The DDCI observed that the key question was how much flexibility would be required.

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4. On the relation of language competency to promotions (Section II), the DDCI noted the necessity for standards that employees should strive to meet. He added, however, that flat rules tended to be counterproductive and room for exceptions had to be made. Discussion on Section III--Attainment of Fluency Levels--included the reliability of the MLAT. [ ] (D/Language School) advised that the MLAT seemed to be a reliable predictor of aptitudes for the major world languages. Mr. Stein noted DDO's efforts to reduce the interruption of employees' language training but explained that the needs of the service had to come first.

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5. Members focused on Recommendation C in Section IV, Recruitment of Language Competent Personnel, that the Office of Personnel be encouraged to recruit language-qualified personnel for the Career Trainee Program even if they do not meet the required formal educational standards. The DDCI noted that such recruitment might meet a short-term need but tends to cause longer term problems when employees have difficulty in competing for promotions. Some organizations contend with this by funding additional education for these employees later in their careers.

6. Commenting on the recommendations in Section V., Space for the Language Program, Mr. Briggs suggested that all space requirements should be considered in some priority order. He thought that NFAC's space needs should take priority over the Language School's. The DDCI noted that, given conditions elsewhere, he was not very sympathetic toward analysts' complaints about insufficient space.

7. Mr. Stein asked if the Agency could afford to devote the Language School resources to a national language improvement program suggested in Section VI. The DDCI stated that he and the DCI believe that they should play the leading role for the Government in this effort. Staff support will be required, but whether the Language School is the best source of that will have to be determined.

8. Task Force Report on Classification/Compensation of Language Specialists. Mr. Fitzwater, Chairman of the Task Force, outlined relevant recommendations of the 1980 NAPA review of the Language Incentive Program, the rationale of the Task Force for recommending that language specialists remain eligible for Language Use Awards, and the reasoning behind his compromise recommendation that language specialists presently receiving awards receive instead a one-time pay adjustment.

9. Messrs. Lipton, McMahon and [ ] concurred with Mr. Fitzwater's recommendation. They thought that employees should not receive additional financial awards for exercising the skills for which they were hired. Mr. Taylor thought that the awards helped DDS&T retain language specialists. Mr. Briggs questioned whether the Agency actually had a problem in retaining language specialists. If it does, he suggested that a special pay scale might be appropriate. Mr. Ware pointed out that many of the Agency's language specialists must also have a second substantive area of expertise to translate technical documents. The DDCI said that he would study this issue further before reaching a decision.

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10. Length of Training Courses. In reviewing [redacted] proposed reductions in training courses, members questioned three recommendations: eliminating the management portion of the Midcareer Course; eliminating [redacted] and eliminating the Human Relations and Management course. The DDCI suggested that the management portion of the Midcareer Course could be given last, permitting those with sufficient management training to complete the course a week earlier. Messrs. Lipton and Taylor said they had found the [redacted] valuable. Mr. Ware suggested ways to retain the Human Relations and Management Course while reducing its cost.

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11. In bringing the discussion to a close, the DDCI said that the tone of this session had left him troubled. He emphasized that the decade of focusing on what the Agency and Intelligence Community could do without was over. He stressed the need to develop new attitudes focusing on what the Agency could do to become a more attractive place for quality people to work and to provide those people the tools they need to do their jobs better. Decisions on training courses should not be based on saving relatively small sums of money in the short run, but on an evaluation of the potential long-term benefits for the Agency's future leaders.

12. The DDCI adjourned the meeting.

[redacted]

Robert M. Gates

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cc: Mr. Fitzwater

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